

quarrying today

Winter 06-07 Issue 20

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front foot approach

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top trade body

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amazing Attenborough

So essential

THE QPA has welcomed the publication of the new Minerals Policy Statement (MPS1) by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The document, which has adopted many of the points raised by the QPA during the consultation, declares that an adequate and steady supply of minerals is essential to society.

MPS1 places particular emphasis on sustainable development and on the use of secondary and recycled materials. The policy is one that has been driven by QPA members with the result that the UK leads Europe on aggregate recycling.

QPA's director general, Simon van der Byl, says: "We welcome the clarity and improvements that MPS1 brings to minerals policy. Above all, we are pleased to see simple recognition of the contribution that minerals make to society. We hope now that mineral planning authorities will play their role in implementing national guidance at the local level."

Research by Tarmac has revealed that the M6 may be Britain's spookiest road. Ghostly sightings reported include Roman soldiers, phantom vehicles and the figure of a lone woman.

Champions

THE Quarry Products Association has been named as *Trade Association of the Year* in the 2006 Trade Association Forum Awards.

The accolade was judged on four key criteria - leadership, innovation, excellence and success. The judging team praised QPA's "highly professional work in many areas and success on many fronts" and described its successful lobbying as "an exemplar for other trade associations".

The QPA also landed the "Environmental Initiative Award" for its sectoral sustainable development strategy. Judges said the strategy represented best practice in engaging stakeholders and



industry alike in the issues of sustainable quarrying.

The awards were presented at a dinner in London by Lord Michael Heseltine to QPA's director general, Simon van der Byl and chairman, Lynda Thompson. Mrs Thompson commented: "This is a fantastic achievement, but no fluke. Our work on sustainable development, issues management, lobbying at home and in Europe, groundbreaking work with the public and our professional service to members has made us a respected and forward-thinking trade association."

New site

QPA has further boosted its successful communications portfolio with the launch of a new state-of-the-art website (www.qpa.org) whose features include an online cinema.

The bright new design is intended to enable stakeholders to move quickly to zones which reflect their individual interests. While children are likely to go to the *Virtual Quarry*,



teenagers may browse in the careers section and those with an environmental interest

could opt for the substantial section on sustainable development.

The magazine-style approach provides bold promotion for key issues of the moment and allows regular updating so that QPA constantly presents a fresh face to return visitors.

A total of 16 videos can be watched or downloaded in the website cinema which includes extracts from the *QPA Showcase 2006* plus new promotional videos.

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Cover photo: Dorney Lake will host rowing and canoeing for the London Olympics.

Glass recycling has been stepped up at Lafarge Aggregates after the company won a £154,000 European grant towards a £385,000 glass crushing machine. The company's network of recycling centres will process 900 million bottles and jars over the next five years.

Making links

QPA members have a new pack of communications tools to help them in the battle to encourage key stakeholders to "make the link" between society's most basic needs and the quarries that make them possible.

The pack includes a guide for members on how to create as many opportunities as possible to demonstrate the true value of their work to everyone from local schools to MPs. Supporting the guide is a range of "tools" including two new QPA videos – *Since time began* and *Rocks around us*, both of which can now be watched on the QPA website.

Other materials include a series of PowerPoint presentations and two new stakeholder brochures, one designed with



site open days in mind and the other packed with facts and figures and targeted at decision-makers.

Aggregate Industries has launched a new initiative to reduce its relative carbon dioxide emissions by 12.5 per cent, from a 2003 baseline, by the end of 2010. All its 450 sites across the UK are taking part.

Too big a burden

A Government-commissioned review of the way in which European legislation is implemented in the UK has confirmed QPA's view that the regulatory burden associated with managing inert waste is "unnecessary".

The issue is a major frustration for quarry operators who say that inert waste that is badly needed for restoration is being sent to disposal sites where regulation is less restrictive and costly.

The Davidson Review was commissioned by the Chancellor Gordon Brown following the Pre-Budget Report of 2005. It examined the manner in which European legislation is implemented in the UK and identified where it is over-implemented.

With the use of inert waste in quarry restoration currently considered "waste disposal" under the over-zealous UK regulations, producers of such wastes are more inclined to take the materials to disposal sites where regulation is less restrictive. Because of this, some quarry operators are finding that effective restoration is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. This in turn makes it more difficult to secure new mineral permissions, which are contingent on agreed restoration plans.

The QPA submitted evidence to the Davidson Review in May, highlighting the need for a level

Marine sustainability

THE British Marine Aggregate Producers Association has produced its own sectoral sustainable development strategy.

While echoing QPA's widely acclaimed approach, BMAPA has recognised that the specific issues associated with marine dredging are very distinct. The strategy document includes a foreword by The Crown Estate's chief executive officer, Roger Bright, in which he praises the industry's commitment to sustainable development while emphasising that significant challenges lie ahead.

BMAPA chairman Kevin Seaman says that the strategy document is only a start and the association expects to have to adjust course as it learns from the substantial information gathering exercise that must follow. The first full report will be produced during 2007.

A wide range of sustainability indicators have been identified against which BMAPA members will pursue key objectives.



playing field. Lord Davidson has now recommended that DEFRA and the Environment Agency should conduct a full review of the regulation of inert waste with the aim of "adopting a more proportionate and risk-based regulatory landscape". He says stakeholders should be formally consulted on options for reform by the end of 2007.

Archaeologists working at a Hanson gravel quarry near Fairford in Gloucestershire have revealed evidence of one of the largest Roman rural cemeteries ever found in the Thames Valley. The location and size of the burial ground are completely unexpected.



Forum for the future

Nigel Jackson is chairman of the CBI Minerals Group, executive director of the Quarry Products Association and an experienced aggregates industry executive.

FEW things are certain in life, but you can be sure that there will never come a time when we won't need minerals. While our use will evolve and research will find some viable alternatives, you can be sure that our children and grandchildren will be as dependent upon them as we are today.

But will we be able to satisfy their needs from our own rich kaleidoscope of UK minerals? In the past, the UK has been almost entirely self-sufficient in meeting our need for minerals. While we now import a large volume of coal and metallic minerals, we are still able to produce most of our own non-metallic minerals. And geological investigations show that there are sufficient resources for many decades to come.

Yet many operators are facing increasing difficulties in obtaining planning permissions. As a result, existing operations may be unable to sustain current levels of production beyond the next 10 to 15 years. While imports could help to fill the gap, that opens up broader issues of sustainability as well as of infrastructure and logistics.

Are we really prepared to allow our indigenous business to decline and put at risk the 55,000 jobs it creates along with the £3.5 billion it contributes to the economy? Given that UK minerals operators consistently achieve high environmental standards, it must be possible to strike the right balance. We will, however, need to fight for it and to do so on behalf of not one but all UK minerals.

That's where the new UK National Minerals Forum comes in. There is a growing

determination that the industry should now get onto the front foot and challenge Government to join up its fragmented thinking on minerals. We have to get back to a situation where we once again have a licence to operate – and win recognition that we do so in the public interest.

It is essential that the industry is now subjected to long-term strategic planning by both operators and government. National need dictates that we think in terms of generations, rather than on the five and ten-year horizon upon which current mineral planning is focused. We need a big picture.

The need for a strategic review is all the more pressing following re-organisation of government departments in England and devolution for Scotland and Wales. In England, the industry is steered by no fewer than four main government departments. As a result, there is now no single organisation to act as guardian of a national minerals strategy, nor any process to link the different perspectives into a coherent national picture.

The last attempt to undertake a strategic overview came some 30 years ago with the 1975 Verney Report on aggregates. Now is the time to repeat that exercise not just for aggregates but for the whole of the industry and put a strategic plan in place for the next 25 years.

We have to look in particular at our cumbersome planning and licensing process. It is, of course, important that different interests are balanced but it is vital that the strategic importance of minerals is properly recognised.



Can production be sustained?

The main challenge for the UK National Minerals Forum is to consider the strategic use of the UK's minerals resources for the next generation and to act as a focal point for developing solutions to issues that unreasonably constrain access to minerals or jeopardise their supply. It is in everyone's interests that we succeed.

Living With Minerals 2
– conference coverage on pages 8 - 9

Partners in time



VISIT a quarry nowadays and the chances are you will find that it is unearthing not just the minerals that we all need but a fascinating insight into local history. But with the industry contributing heavily to the archaeological cause – both financially and in management time – there is growing caution over the sheer scale of the commitment.

The great majority of archaeological work is funded by operators as required by planning conditions. There are also occasions when the tax collected by aggregates operators helps to unlock a fascinating new insight into our past.

As the Government’s principal adviser on all aspects of the historic environment (including the seabed) English Heritage has to date distributed over £13 million in grants to over 200 projects. Its remit is to support projects which either promote environmentally-friendly extraction and transport or address the environmental impacts of past aggregate extraction.

Researchers, often working with quarrying firms, have been able to make real technological advances in prospecting, prediction, and mitigation methodologies. Emphasis has also been placed on promoting public awareness through educational and community engagement initiatives.

The ALSF was of particular benefit at Tarmac’s Cheviot quarry in Northumberland (above) when contractor Archaeological Research Services was handling investigations ahead of extraction. Its team unexpectedly discovered remains in an area equivalent in size to two football pitches including at least six buildings, hundreds of pieces of pottery and a human burial pit.

While the company has completely met its archaeological planning conditions, significant additional work was needed. Such was the national importance that the site became eligible for ALSF assistance funding. Detailed dating and analysis has shown that the site is a multi-phased settlement with building remains dating from the Neolithic (over 5,000 years ago) through the late Bronze Age and up to the 5th or 6th centuries AD.

At the other end of the country, at Bestwall Quarry in Dorset (right), archaeologists have received “exemplary voluntary support” from Bardon Aggregates. Work there has been in progress since 1992 and has involved volunteers from the Wareham and District Archaeology and Local History Society.



Some “breathtaking” archaeology has been uncovered there spanning the last 7,000 years. A team of over 160 volunteers has made it one of the largest public-involvement projects in Britain. Excavation has now been completed and an ALSF grant was awarded to the local society to undertake analysis, upgrade its website, and produce a mobile exhibition.

The degree of constructive cooperation between

QPA’s first sustainable development report shows 120 archaeological investigations underway at member quarries

all parties has delighted Barney Sloane, head of historic environment commissions at English Heritage. “One of the most valuable outcomes of the ALSF has been the forging of new partnerships,” he says.

“We have seen the quarrying industry, universities, commercial and contracting organisations, museums and local people all working together to design and deliver excellent and innovative projects which will make a real difference to the understanding, management and enjoyment of the historic environment in aggregate producing areas.”

The growing scale of the industry’s commitment is, however, a cause for concern. This is particularly the case with new investigations proposed by the National Ice Age Network where remains are sought from the sand and gravel deposit itself rather than the overburden.

This would bring archaeologists into active working areas and, in addition to potential disruption to working, would create concerns over safety.

While keen to maintain its productive partnership with archaeologists, QPA is seeking to re-establish the CBI code of practice on archaeology in mineral workings as the basis for consistent and proportional management of surface investigations.



On course

IT'S been 40 years in the making, but the vision for the UK's premier rowing facility has finally become a reality. Eton Aggregates, a consortium of four quarrying companies, has played a vital role in shaping the Eton College Rowing Centre, Dorney Lake, which is set to achieve international renown when it hosts rowing and canoeing for the London Olympics.

The impressive 2,200 metre rowing course is accompanied by a warm-up channel and a finish tower, which contains the judges' viewing area, timing and media facilities. In 2012, the site will be equipped with 20,000 spectator seats.

But the 400-acre park is far more than just an exceptional rowing facility. Although privately owned, the site is open to the whole community, and is popular with local dog-walkers and joggers. A gymnasium is found in the state-of-the-art boathouse, which also

hosts wedding receptions and conferences, while family fun days take place in the extensive grounds.

The Dorney Lake site also attracts a host of wildlife – in its arboretum, where 30,000 native and exotic trees have been planted; in the wildflower meadows and wetlands that form a nature conservation area; and in the lake itself. To date, over 80 species of bird have been sighted, of which about 35 will breed.

Bruce Brock is general manager for Eton Aggregates, which represents CEMEX, Lafarge

Aggregates, Maidenhead-based Summerleaze and Tarmac. "The joint venture has worked very well," says Bruce. "Summerleaze offers local knowledge and facilities, while the larger companies have a great deal of experience in such major, high profile projects."

"Creating a rowing lake has been different to simply removing a deposit of gravel from where it naturally lies. The lake has to be dug to specific dimensions, which means leaving gravel in the side slopes and the return lake island. In particular, the depth must be



Top: Material from Dorney Lake was used to create bridges over the Jubilee River, a few miles down the road in Maidenhead. Eton Aggregates played a vital role in the Environment Agency's flood relief scheme.



Factfile

- The 2,200-metre rowing course has eight lanes and holds some 3.5 million gallons of water
- Fertiliser use was restricted for several years before construction began to ensure high-quality water
- The water is fed from underground aquifers, percolating through a natural gravel filter
- Weeds are discouraged by natural methods, including using carp
- Nearly 4.5 million tonnes of sand and gravel, two million cubic metres of topsoil and subsoil and 585,000 cubic metres of basal clay have been extracted
- Eton College financed the main development at a cost of £17 million, offset by royalties of some £8 million for aggregates extracted.

consistent at four metres, which means that, when the deposit was insufficient, we had to cut into the clay beneath.

"We have also needed to be mindful of some important archaeological material, which has been uncovered during excavation. This includes a series of bridges, a Roman farmstead, human skeletons and the oldest scythe found in Britain. In partnership with Eton College, we have produced archaeology packs for primary schools, which the children find very interesting."

The industry was approached by Eton College in 1995, although the seed of an idea for a 'still water' rowing course offering greater safety than the River Thames was sown in the 1960s. Key in Eton Aggregates' winning bid was the installation of a mile-long conveyor, which has

taken over half of the material across the Thames to a processing plant in the nearby village of Bray, so greatly reducing the number of lorries on the roads.

Roderick Watson, special projects advisor for the lake says: "The site has been transformed from the flat arable land that was there before. Eton Aggregates has created a more undulating landform, providing a surround in sympathy with the lake, and habitats for a range of plants and wildlife.

"Not only is this site wonderful for rowers from Eton College, other schools and older groups, but it is a world-class stage for rowing internationally. It is of huge benefit for the whole community."



Licence to operate



Birth of the UK National Minerals Forum in Westminster heralds a bold new combined effort by the UK's minerals sector to win "a better deal" from Government. The growing concerns of what many regard as a battered group of industries came to surface at the *Living With Minerals 2* conference, which preceded the launch of the forum by Minister Baroness Andrews OBE.

BEING essential to the national interest is no guarantee of being allowed to operate. Winning permission to do just that has, according to delegates at the *Living With Minerals 2* conference, become an increasingly difficult prospect.

It is made all the more frustrating by the "unjoined-up" approach of Government which allocates responsibility for minerals to not one but several departments. With increasing constraints from UK and Euro legislation, the result is serious doubt over capacity to supply the nation's needs beyond the next ten years.

It is that proposition which has driven the launch by the CBI Minerals Group of the UK National Minerals Forum. QPA and its members are solidly behind the initiative,

which is seeking a strategic long-term review of all mineral resources. The forum also sets out to establish a consistent interface with Government in overcoming conflicts arising from the cumulative impacts of legislation. It aims to be "a lean, mean solutions machine".

The conference was chaired by Anglo American's chairman, Sir Mark Moody-Stuart. He insisted that the industry had a vital national and international role to play in economic growth and in the drive to reduce carbon. "To do that, we must maintain our licence to operate and build trust," he said. "Our problem is that there is strong competition for land uses and the population as a whole doesn't see itself as reliant on extractive industries."

His end-of-conference summary was: "We are vital but we are undervalued and it could take a generation to change that."

CBI president, Sir John Sunderland, described the planning system as "cumbersome" and said that what was needed was more effective government sponsorship and championing, and a strategic debate about reserves.

John Gummer MP told the conference that the minerals sector would be crucial to the way the UK handles climate change and insisted that it had already done better than most industries. "For a long time, minerals suffered because it was regarded as a surrogate for road-building," he said. "You need to occupy the moral high ground by ensuring that people understand the facts and that the more successful we are as a nation, the more we need minerals."

Sustaining access

There was general agreement in the discussion group focused on access that the Local Development Framework system was not working effectively and that its various



2012 Olympics: will be supplied but how sustainably?

John Gummer: "Occupy the moral high ground"

elements were complex and "not joined up". There was also considerable criticism of the consultation process, which many felt was far too demanding for parish councils in particular.

The industry's own planning resources were being stretched to the limits to cope with the requirements of the process, which was being further complicated by the EU's capacity to spring surprises which made it all the more difficult to achieve permissions in a realistic timetable.

Security of supply

Concern was expressed that the UK is increasingly dependent upon imports for energy minerals and metals in particular and that sources are often scarce, with a resulting vulnerability and risk of interruption to supply.

While the nation will, by 2010, be a net importer of both oil and gas, there were also concerns that it will be facing critical issues on non-energy minerals such as aggregates by 2016.

The supply discussion group didn't have all the answers but it posed a host of questions including:

- How can the UK industry's need for minerals be best assessed?
- How do we define national need and should Government be highlighting the national need for a particular mineral or for all of them?

- To what extent is growing legislation increasing our vulnerability?
- Where are the next generation of quarries and why isn't the industry bringing forward applications?

Satisfying need

Can the sector supply the massive minerals needs of projects like the 2012 Olympics, the Thames Gateway, Crossrail, growth areas and new airports? With a total estimated investment of over £50 billion, such projects look set to apply huge pressure on top of base demand.

The discussion group concentrating on the issue concluded that the industry would "get it done". But the big question was: how sustainably? The prospect is that imports and a free market might be the only way to take the strain, with resulting transport and carbon emission downsides.

The group emphasised the need for strategic long-term planning, closer partnership between all stakeholders and more efficient use of the aggregates levy to aid new research into sustainable supply sources.

Environmental dialogue

The need for better communication as a means of raising image and understanding was

a recurring theme. There was a recognition that the environment was all about people and quality of life, and two key questions posed were: do we really need to meet demand?; and how can we manage our future requirements in a changing world?

There was a consensus that good environmental ground was already being made by the industry – notably with the publication by both QPA and the British Cement Association of sectoral sustainable development strategies with measurable targets. But there was agreement that more needs to be done to improve engagement and emphasise the value of minerals.

The environmental discussion group again stressed the challenge to reduce the industry's carbon footprint and to demonstrate a lifecycle assessment of what it does - from planning through to restoration and ultimately recycling of materials.

"Genuine" two-way consultation with flexibility to respond to community suggestions was quoted as essential in the drive to strike the right balance between the often competing needs of sustaining supplies while protecting the environment.

Spotlight on sustainability

QPA Showcase has become the industry's shop window on sustainability. The hour-long show – hosted again this year by TV news personality Fiona Bruce – also makes the link between everyday life and the usually unheralded quarries that make it possible. Here, we review just some of the stories featured in Showcase 2006.

Quarry adventure

"A real quarry adventure" was the way that a ten-year old described the Virtual Quarry website (www.virtualquarry.co.uk). After exploring the new resource in the school's ICT suite, his class visited Midland Quarry Product's Cliffe Hill Quarry in Leicestershire. Their teacher enthused: "My pupils love using the Virtual Quarry. The teachers' resources have been a breath of fresh air as they have given a new and exciting slant to the existing QCA



educational units. I would also recommend visiting a real quarry – a wonderful resource that I would not have previously considered using."

Closing the floodgates

With concerns mounting over the potential for flooding in many areas of the UK, Tarmac's flood alleviation scheme at its All Souls Farm Quarry is a welcome solution for nearby Slough residents. The local housing estate has been flooded by the Datchet Brook several times since the properties were built in the 1970s.

Salvation lay in gravel extraction as the medium through which Tarmac created a new channel landform that would keep rising waters safely away from the houses. In return, the company received a windfall of 250,000 tonnes of saleable sand and gravel.

Sporting chance

Dorney Lake, created by gravel extraction, is set to host rowing and canoeing at the London 2012 Olympics (see page 8), but its facilities are so in demand that an additional 2km-long training lake has been developed by Lafarge at Caversham, near Reading. The £13 million Sport England Facility has been described by

the Amateur Rowing Association as "one of the best anywhere in the world".

Premiership football champions, Chelsea, are also chasing sporting success – on a pitch created from quarry products. Chelsea is one of the many high profile clubs that are fans of a new breed of turf. The secret ingredient is a product known as fibre sand, patented by Mansfield Sand Company. It contains



Responsible recycling

On the Isle of Anglesey, Hanson Aggregates is using waste glass as an aggregate substitute in asphalt for roads. Up to 6,000 tonnes of glass is taken from a waste collection centre next door to its Gwalchmai Quarry. The finished asphalt contains about ten per cent of glass. Hanson's David Weeks, calls it "responsible local recycling at its very best."

Cleaner emissions

Quarries are playing an important role in helping the UK's power stations to control their sulphur dioxide emissions. At Lafarge's Dowlow Quarry near Buxton in Derbyshire, a particularly pure grade of limestone is produced which makes it ideal to "scrub" the gases emitted from the EDF power station near Retford in Nottinghamshire.

Emissions of sulphur dioxide, which reacts with the limestone to produce gypsum, are cut by about 90 per cent.

polypropylene fibres that give the turf resistance to wear and divoting.

The fibre sand is then transported to a nursery in Grantham and used in the custom-grown turf. Jason Griffin, Chelsea grounds manager, said: "We're very pleased with this pitch at Stamford Bridge. The players are very happy with it and so are we."

Make the Link



Welsh National Assembly, Cardiff
Thanks to CEMEX's

Wenvoe Quarry for aggregates



Isle of Sheppey bridge
Thanks to Brett Aggregates for recycled fill and sub-base



Stirling - Alloa - Kincardine rail line, Scotland
Thanks to Ennstone's

Ballmullo Quarry in Fife for ballast

RESTORATION AWARDS 2006

The QPA's coveted Cooper Heyman Cup for outstanding restoration went this year to CEMEX and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust for Attenborough Nature Reserve (see page 12). Here, we take a whirlwind tour of the other six award winners.

CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

Julie Rose was a gifted young athlete who went to America to train because there were no adequate facilities in Ashford, Kent. Tragically, she died there in a plane crash aged 21. The stadium that carries her name was praised by judges for its importance to the community. Its development was a co-operation between many parts of the community, and it now provides a wonderful facility for people of all ages and abilities both locally and nationally. The award went to Brett Aggregates, Ashford Borough Council and the Julie Rose Stadium Trust.



AWARD

Lafarge Aggregates is progressively restoring its Cadeby Quarry near Doncaster. A former overburden store has been graded and landformed, with some overburden left to maintain bare open habitat. Rare limestone grassland has also been seeded. The quarry floor has been developed as arable cropping through the gradual placement of quarry waste, overburden and soils. A batter or "scree slope" has been formed to the north, which will be left for natural colonisation after some initial remedial work.



Gloucestershire, for crushed stone

Herod Parkway School, Swindon
Thanks to Hills Aggregates' Shorncote Quarry,

SPECIAL MERIT

In the village of Powburn in Northumberland, CEMEX has created two new lakes in what was once a sand and gravel quarry: one for nature conservation, and the other for fishing. Grass has been seeded and shrubs, bushes and trees have been planted around the edges of the banks and nearby areas.



SPECIAL MERIT



After over sixty years of operation, Hanson Aggregates' Ripon Quarry in North Yorkshire is now being gradually restored. This includes a trout lake, which is very popular with anglers, and several hectares of surrounding land. The tranquil and remote setting also appeals to wildlife, including over 2,000 species of bird. Reedbed, wetland areas, wet grassland and alder carr woodland are all being developed on the site.

AWARD

After 44 years of gravel extraction, Alington Quarry near Market Drayton was sensitively restored to agricultural land for grazing – but the legacy left by quarrying remains. Part of

the quarry face, now covered in vegetation, can still be seen, but there is also a range of new habitats, including woodlands, pastures, ponds and wetland. Hanson Aggregates successfully integrated the land into the local landscape to create a seamless transition between the two.

AWARD

Graham Water is a 12-acre lake which nestles at the heart of the active sand and gravel workings of Gill Mill Quarry in the Windrush Valley, Oxfordshire. The lake is a former pit, which has evolved into a sanctuary for waterfowl and wetland plants and a popular place for fishing. Extensive tree and shrub



planting has endeavoured to replicate the structure of the original valley landscape.



Buzzard, site for silica sand for the new pitch

Emirates Stadium, London
Thanks to WBB Minerals, Leighton



Quarry, Leicestershire, for aggregates and asphalt

M6 toll motorway (southern)
Thanks to Lafarge's Mountsorrel

RESTORATION

One more bow

THEY have been heaping praise on Attenborough's gravel pits for more than 60 years now. Bird watchers started the applause way back in 1944 when they recorded 250 species. Sir David Attenborough admired the site when he first opened a nature reserve in 1966 and then came back in 2005 to launch its visitor centre. In between came official recognition as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Now, QPA has recognised the magnificence of the 365-hectare nature reserve beside the Trent south west of Nottingham with the award of its coveted Cooper Herman Cup to operators CEMEX and to its partners, the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Broxtowe Borough Council.

But perhaps the most significant accolade has come from local people, including many from the more socially-challenged areas of Nottingham and Derby. For them, Attenborough is a place not just for quiet enjoyment of nature but for more active fun



like sailing, horse riding and fishing.

The near 80-year sand and gravel quarrying process has made a huge contribution to the built environment across a wide area of the East Midlands. In doing so, it has created a patchwork of lakes and islands and opened the door to legions of wildlife.

The site attracts a high level of volunteer support. Its education programme recently recorded its 6,500th child participant and there are even interactive games for toddlers. But the new visitor centre with its spectacular lakeland views also performs an important social role as a venue for events ranging from weddings to christenings.

Funding was obtained from the East Midlands Development Agency and from CEMEX's Environment Fund amongst others to make the centre an exemplar eco-friendly facility. The



super-insulated structure generates its own power from an array of solar panels and sometimes even exports its excess to the national grid.

The visitor centre performs an important social role as a venue for events ranging from weddings to christenings.

The social contribution made by Attenborough is confirmed by the team responsible for it. Centre manager Louise Buckley regards it as a "tranquil and yet informative escape" from the nearby bustle

of Nottingham and Derby. Erin McDaid from the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust says that "local schools and families have benefited enormously - it has become the focus for community activity."